

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2629

As Reported by House Committee On:
Juvenile Justice & Family Law

Title: An act relating to requiring release of court hearing information.

Brief Description: Requiring release of court hearing information.

Sponsors: Representatives Kagi, Boldt, Dickerson, Delvin, Darneille, Pettigrew and Carrell.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Juvenile Justice & Family Law: 1/27/04, 2/3/04 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Clarifies that information pertaining to the date, time, and location of a child in need of services, at-risk youth, dependency, termination, or truancy court hearing is not confidential and may be made available to the public.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUVENILE JUSTICE & FAMILY LAW

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Dickerson, Chair; Pettigrew, Vice Chair; Delvin, Ranking Minority Member; Carrell, Hinkle, Lovick and Upthegrove.

Staff: Sonja Hallum (786-7092).

Background:

Juvenile, non-criminal records are confidential and may only be released in very limited circumstances. Some examples of records that are categorized as juvenile, non-criminal relate to child in need of services (CHINS), at-risk youth (ARY), dependency, termination, and truancy proceedings.

The prohibition against release of confidential records in these types of hearings has led to some confusion as to whether the scheduling information for those hearings is also confidential. As a result, some courts in Washington are releasing scheduling information including court hearing dates, times, and locations for dependency and termination hearings that are open to the public while other courts are not releasing this information under the belief that this information is part of the court record and, as such, is confidential.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Information pertaining to the date, time, and location of CHINS, ARY, dependency, termination, and truancy court hearings is not confidential and may be made available to the public.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Clarifies that scheduling information for truancy, CHINS, ARY, dependency, and termination of parental rights shall be made available to the public, rather than released to the public.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This is a result of a constituent complaint of a relative who was unable to find out information about a court hearing. It is hard to attend a hearing if you don't know when it is scheduled.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Kagi, prime sponsor; Rowland Thompson, Allied Daily Newspaper; and Martha Harden, Superior Court Judges Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.